



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Chairman in Office Dr. Dimitrij Rupel Minister of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
For the opening session of the Annual Security Review Conference,
Vienna June 21, 2005

Thank you, Dr. Frlec, and thank you Minister Rupel and Ambassador Sychov for your stimulating remarks.

Let me begin by being frank. Last year, I think we would all agree, was not the smoothest one for the OSCE. We disagreed over a range of issues, big and small. Some were moved to say that the organization was in crisis while others expressed doubts as to whether there is a need at all for the OSCE. Let me assure you that the OSCE is not in crisis. It is probably doing its job as well as or better than ever.

Instead of fixating on disagreements, which certainly exist but are also vastly exaggerated, we should focus on our accomplishments and on the future. What we need now, in other words, is a solid dose of perspective.

That is why this year's Annual Security Review Conference, with its emphasis on implementation of the "OSCE's Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century," is so timely and appropriate. A little stock-taking of what we have done and what we are doing in the field of security, across all its dimensions, is exactly what we need to show that this organization is more vibrant and relevant today than it has ever been. Allow me to begin with a few broad examples:

The OSCE is more involved than ever before in combatting terrorism through its efforts to destroy surplus conventional munitions and small arms and light weapons, and to tighten export controls on MANPADS. Participating States are in the process of implementing earlier decisions on tightening travel document security and combatting terrorist financing, especially the abuse of non-governmental organizations and charities as conduits for terrorist funds. At last year's Annual Security Review Conference, the OSCE endorsed the U.S. initiative and began a dialogue on enhancing shipping container security.

The OSCE has done much to raise political will in participating States to implement existing OSCE commitments to combat intolerance and discrimination in all its forms, as well as to combat trafficking in persons by promoting legislative reform, increased law enforcement cooperation, and the development of non-governmental organizations. Combatting intolerance and trafficking in persons contributes to comprehensive security by removing a major source of instability within and among states.

Resolving regional conflicts remains an essential part of the OSCE's mandate. And while progress in resolving the so-called "frozen conflicts" in Moldova, Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh has been

hard to measure, we believe a strong argument can be made that the OSCE's involvement has helped these disputes from going from cold to hot.

There have been some encouraging developments on several of these longstanding problems. We welcome the progress recently made by Georgia and Russia on base withdrawal issues. This is an important step toward fulfillment of the commitments on Georgia and Moldova that were made in the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit. Fulfillment of these commitments is, for my government, a prerequisite for ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty, an agreement that has real security benefits to all members of the OSCE. We would welcome, during the course of this conference, an indication of plans to resume withdrawal of Russian forces from Moldova. This would also send an important signal to the Transnistrian leadership that the *status quo* in Moldova is not acceptable to the international community.

Increasingly, the sources of instability and tension that Europe and Eurasia are facing originate from outside the OSCE's borders. In response, the OSCE has accelerated its engagement and cooperation with partners and other non-member states to the east and south. At the same time, the OSCE has strengthened cooperation with NATO, the EU, and the Council of Europe and has reduced areas of overlap and duplication with these organizations. Still, lest we impede the ability of these organizations to bring their unique capabilities to bear upon these issues, we should be mindful that a little overlap is better than a gap.

Finally, no activity of the OSCE, in our view, has been more important and constructive than the institution building work the OSCE has done and continues to do in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The organization's seventeen field missions and institutions such as ODIHR are unquestionably contributing to the stability and security of all of Europe by helping the governments in these areas to develop and operate judicial systems and police forces that have the confidence of their people and to conduct free and fair elections on their own.

In sum, through its field missions and institutions, the OSCE is helping to build stability throughout Europe and Eurasia by promoting the full range of qualities on which security depends – release from state sanctioned restraint, a vibrant civil society and independent media, a democratic election process meeting OSCE standards, ethnic and religious tolerance and understanding, respect for human rights and the rule of law, competent civil administration, and a market economy.

Building stability by promoting these qualities is a fundamental security interest of my country and every other OSCE participating State. This is not a question of competing blocs or international organizations. It is an unfortunate continuation of the battle between the forces of freedom and the forces of oppression, of those that subjugate the human condition. The OSCE's role in promoting security now is as clear and as important as it was when the organization was founded. The OSCE's standards and commitments have not changed. The receptivity of some governments to supporting them may be wavering, and that is a real cause for concern.

One of our main goals in this two-day conference is to measure the progress we have made in implementing the recommendations of the "OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-first Century." All of our governments adopted this important document two and a half years ago by our Ministers in Maastricht. Allow me for a moment to quote from paragraph 4 of the Strategy:

"Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, for democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. Strong democratic institutions and the rule

of law play an important role in preventing threats from arising. Weak governance, and a failure by States to secure adequate and functioning democratic institutions that can promote stability, may in themselves constitute a breeding ground for a range of threats.”

Mr. Chairman, esteemed guests.

By any measure, I think we can say that the OSCE has a proud record in terms of promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as stability in our region. And I hope we will discuss this record in detail over the course of the next two days. But we are not yet where we need to be in terms of reaching the goals that we have set for ourselves. For this reason, I hope we can all join together in the coming months leading up to the Ljubljana Ministerial and decide collectively to provide field missions and institutions with the resources they need and the flexibility they need to fulfill the mandates we have set for them, and to help all of us achieve those solemn commitments that we have made to each other.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.